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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

MR. EDITOR: Cardinal Manning's article is very much to be commended. It is extremely temperate, and at the same time clear and firm on the right side.

The moral power of corrupt passions in great cities has again and again proved itself to be more than a match for the moral power of the upper classes of society. It is remarkable how unanimous representative men are against gambling, crime, and vice, and every form of salacious immorality, and yet equally remarkable is the refusal of society in any concerted way to meddle with the subject; and we perceive on every side that men's actions are more affected by the infelicity of those who seek to stay corruption than they are by the corruption itself.

They know that thousands of men are ruined by intemperance, and in the case of London, uncounted thousands destroyed by licentiousness and every form of iniquity. And yet they never themselves institute one influence to suppress them, nor join with those who try to do so, but content themselves by standing off and criticising the infelicity of those who are earnestly working for the suppression of vice. We have a parallel instance in the city of New York. There can be no doubt as to the abominations of dishonesty, of gamblers in every form and shape, but Mr. Comstock has made himself the object of unlimited abuse, because in the employment of the law he has attempted to suppress, or, at any rate, to circumscribe the bounds of those overflowing fountains of public corruption.

That the evil is great is admitted; that it ought to be suppressed is admitted; but the moment any man undertakes to suppress it, good men and moral turn from him, and are more severe on his methods than they are on the iniquity he is endeavoring to suppress. In all our great cities the dregs at the bottom of society are drawn up to the surface, causing a malaria of unhealth.

It may be said that almost every modern city is built on the foundations of Sodom, and that the venomous character of wickedness at the bottom of society is in the proportion of the virtuousness of the top. In other words, men of intellect and piety refuse to exert any remedial influence which will oblige them to come into contact with men of corrupt animal passions. They separate themselves from their kind, because their kind are so wicked, and place themselves in the condition of the Scribes and Pharisees, against whom Christ uttered his maledictions. Their religion was without humanity. They served God by despising sinners.

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

II.

MR. EDITOR : The "New York Tribune" published, on the 6th of July last, a telegram to the effect that General Diaz, President of the United Mexican States, was disposed to sell to the United States of America six of the Northern States of Mexico, for the purpose of obtaining the necessary funds to save the country from the financial crisis through which she is now passing. I stated, on the 21st of the same month, to a reporter of the Associated Press at this city, that I did not credit that rumor, because I did not think that any country having any self-respect should recur to suicide in order to surmount a difficulty of a transitory character.

You addressed me, on the 24th of said July, a letter on the subject, stating that the friends of Mexico in this country believed that there was some foundation for the report, and that it seemed to them that although General Diaz might at first repudiate it, he would at last accept it in order to save, in this wise, the financial situation of Mexico, particularly if a favorable opinion of the matter could be formed in both countries; or in other words, that the President of Mexico wished to feel the pulse of the two nations concerning this important subject. I answered, on the 2d of the following August, that I had already heard from General Diaz, and that the report that he was willing to sell any portion of the Mexican territory not only had no foundation at all, but that, on the contrary, his ideas on this point were entirely in accordance with mine.

Since the 24th of last July I addressed a letter to General Diaz, informing him of what was thought here to be his views on the subject, and on the 6th of August he wrote me a letter stating, "that if any person in the United States believed, in good faith, that he entertained the idea of selling any portion of the Mexican territory, he was wholly mistaken, as he had not only never uttered any word which might be construed in that sense, even at a great stretch, but had always, on the contrary, expressed himself, whenever speaking on the subject, in clear, precise, and even energetic terms; that he attributed these reports to the policy of his enemies in Mexico, and, therefore, thought proper that those who had given credit to the same in this country should know the truth."

Wishing, on one hand, to comply with General Diaz's desires on the subject, and, on the other, to inform you of the result of this incident, I quote here the terms of the reply of the President of Mexico.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

M. ROMERO.

MEXICAN LEGATION, *Washington, D. C.*

III.

IN 1873 there were eighty Americans studying music in Milan. Out of this number have come Albani, Valleria, Miss Thursby, Miss Kate Smith, better known as Mlle. Caterina Measco, now singing in Europe, and Miss Josie Jones Yorke, still with the opera company of Carl Rosa in England. Since that time Paris has contributed Miss Van Zandt, Miss Emma Nevada and Miss Griswold, and to these, whose reputations belong to both continents, we add the names of

Miss Kellogg, Miss Cary, Minnie Hauk, and Mr. William Candidus, and remembering how rarely the flower of success blooms, we gain some idea of the musical fertility of this country. No other nation has produced an equal number of singers of equal reputation in the same time; but as a nation we have been the last to realize and profit by our own manifest advantage. It is as if we had left England to invent the cotton-gin, and France, McCormick's reaper.

But there is another side which should appeal as strongly to our sympathies as this to our pride. At that time Milan was a representative musical center, but Florence, Naples, Vienna, and Paris had each its nucleus of American students. The greater number of these were sent there through the generous interest of friends at home. In many instances to do this involved on the part of affection much self-sacrifice. But few of these singers had undertaken a musical career save with the expectation of success in that high and brilliant sense that Patti and Nilsson represented. None other was worthy an American girl's ambition. Conviction, however, has its own slow but relentless force. It arrived in time with the knowledge that to be a great singer is to aim beyond the stars and hit the mark. Unwilling to endure the humiliation of a less brilliant homecoming, numbers of these students have preferred to remain abroad and hold leading positions in the inferior Italian towns. The unwritten tragedies of many of these self-imposed duties have been due in great measure to our national misconceptions. With the exception of church choirs there was no place in this country except for great singers. Music was an art to be seen rather than to be heard. The phenomenal or the marvelous alone could add to its value.

Since that time, and especially in the few past years, a notable change has taken place in one point of view. There is a tendency to regard music as something desirable independent of individualities. This is due to the efforts of a handful of people, and notably those of Mr. Theodore Thomas in his orchestral concerts, and aided more recently by Dr. Damrosch in his season of German opera. These new conditions demand new provisions.

Happily that period arises with our first moments of national leisure. A young nation is inevitably absorbed in providing for the necessities of its existence; but, this work achieved, there arise new wants that prove as imperative as those which have before commanded attention. To these the increase of wealth and wisdom of the country alone can minister. It is the appreciation of these facts that has led to musical projects on the part of a few public-spirited citizens of the United States. These have taken the form of an organization, with the following gentlemen as its corporators: Mayor William R. Grace, Mr. August Belmont, Mr. Joseph M. Drexel, Mr. Richard Irvin, jr., Mr. Francis B. Thurber, Judge William G. Choate, Mr. Theodore Thomas, Mr. Parke Godwin, Mr. Henry G. Marquand, Mr. Jesse Seligman, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, of New York City; Mr. Henry S. Higginson, of Boston; Mr. Harrison Garrett, of Baltimore; Mr. A. Howard Henken, of Cincinnati; Mr. N. K. Fairbanks, of Chicago; Mr. Leopold Wetherby, of St. Louis. The ultimate aim of this organization is a National Conservatory of Music, the initiatory step the National School of Opera.

The address to the country takes the form of a demonstration of native capabilities and an exposition of new methods of representing operatic works in a season of American opera, to be inaugurated this coming winter. Of this, Mr. Charles E. Loder, so favorably known in connection with the Wagner concerts and with Mr. Theodore Thomas, will be the *impresario*, while Mr. Thomas will have the entire musical direction.

The first consideration appeals not only to our national pride, but more shrewdly to our commercial trait of seeing what we have before we pay for it. The public is asked to interest itself in the new project only after being shown the sample. The second is of higher and wider interest in its relation to the musical development of this country. The first result of presenting opera as a musical and dramatic *ensemble*, which is the intention of Mr. Thomas, is the subordination of personalities to ends more distinctly musical. This is the reverse of the prevailing system, and in bringing the various parts into different and more harmonious relations, at once creates a different *esprit de corps*. Setting aside its value to music as an art, it is of sufficient interest to engage attention in the inducements thus offered to a large number of singers. The American student is amenable to motives of a certain dignity, as the numerous applications already made for positions in the chorus from numerous homes all over the land bear witness.

Madame Marchesi, than whom there could be no more conclusive authority, has said that the United States is rapidly becoming the country to which the musical world will look for its singers, and accounts for the unusually good voices found among American girls, by the fact that they are taught to speak clearly and in no uncertain tones from childhood. The American voice has heretofore attracted attention by no means so flattering. But these words go far to compensate for less kind but equally truthful comment.

It is these forecasts that warrant the generous enterprise of which the first branch established will be the National School of Opera. So far as its policy is outlined, it is to attempt only what can be done effectively. It is in this way that the great conservatories of Europe, although supported by government subsidies, have arisen. In this country, private enterprise must take the place of public funds. How much can be done will depend on the financial support received. But the country is proverbially liberal in operatic matters. A guaranty fund of \$50,000 is often raised in this city for a single season of opera. In view of these facts, there seems to be no doubt that a project, appealing not only to our national pride and national sympathies, but becoming a necessity brought before us by the great law of supply and demand, will be generously upheld.

As the incorporators are scattered over an extent of country and the business of organizing will require frequent meetings, the direction of the school has been intrusted to a board of trustees composed of the following persons: Mrs. August Belmont, Mrs. Wm. T. Blodgett, Mrs. Francis B. Thurber, Mrs. Thomas Ward, Mrs. Richard Irvin, jr., Mr. August Belmont, Mayor Grace, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, Mr. Parke Godwin, Mr. Henry G. Marquand.

In love of art, business ability, and social position, the board presents various elements that contribute to success in any undertaking. The domestic

culture of music as it were with us in a National Conservatory, where training in all the highest branches of music can be obtained, and in which it is hoped the school of opera will be merged, must have certain indirect but equally important results.

One does not speak of an American school, but it is inevitable that a certain differentiation must in time result. It is quite as well if we hope it will result in our favor, and the star of music westward take its way. It will certainly do much toward creating a musical medium that will stimulate musical composition as well as musical execution.

But the most beguiling view of the subject is not in the outlook for budding American talent, nor in our national glorification, but in the contemplation of the sum of human happiness which the wide diffusion of musical culture will increase. The most critical and appreciative audiences in the world are found among the blouses and nodding caps in the top-most galleries of little Italian theaters. An Italian peasant may make his mark, but he knows every phrase of his Verdi, Bellini, Rossini, and Donizetti. The American has been to the public schools and has learned the value of primaries, but of music, as the Italian understands it, he agrees rather with Gautier, *C'est le bruit qui coûte le plus d'argent*. It is the touch of grace and joy that the arts alone can bestow, which the life of the American citizen lacks. It is this which the present project goes far to supply.

MARY GAY HUMPHREYS.

IV.

MR. EDITOR : We notice at the head of the first article in the September number of your REVIEW the following quotation :

"Les financiers soutiennent l'état comme la corde soutient le pendu."—Montesquieu.

We venture, therefore, to address you a slight verification in the form of a history of this clever saying.

It is incorrect to attribute it to Montesquieu, it having been uttered by Marshal Duc de Noailles in reply to an observation of King Louis XV., that the "fermiers généraux" (farmers of the taxes) were a support to the state.

"Oui, Sire," replied the Duke, "comme la corde soutient le pendu."

Our authority for this is Michaud's "Biographie Universelle," 1822, and following editions—articles on Noailles. The Marshal was long known under the title of the Duc d'Ayen and famous for his "bons mots." He was the ancestor of the present Marquis de Noailles, formerly French Minister to the United States, and now Ambassador at Constantinople, and of his elder brother, the Duc d'Ayen, who has recently, through the death of his father, (ancien pair de France, member of the French Academy, etc.), succeeded to the title of Duc de Noailles.

J. BAUDRY JEANCOURT.

PARIS, Office of "Galignani's Messenger," September 14, 1885.